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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3660
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0833
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3743
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1050
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2823
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7577
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5277
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0174
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1955
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 000534

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS
MCC FOR S GROFF, D NASSIRY, E BURKE AND F REID

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/05/2017

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TAMIL PARLIAMENT MEMBERS PRESS
AMBASSADOR TO SHARPEN CRITICISM OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

REF: COLOMBO 521

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b, d).

1. (C) SUMMARY. In an April 3 meeting with Ambassador, opposition party Tamil National Alliance (TNA) leader R. Sampanthan and three TNA members of Parliament pressed the U.S. to be a more vocal critic of the Rajapaksa administration. Speaking of the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party's (SLFP) anticipated devolution proposal, Sampanthan expressed concern that it would be "watered down" by President Rajapaksa into a proposal that the Tamil community could not accept. TNA members spoke with concern about worsening human rights abuses and stated unequivocally that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) would accept UN human rights monitors based in LTTE-controlled territory. In an April 4 meeting with poloff, TNA parliamentarian Selvan Adaikalanathan from the LTTE-controlled Vanni district repeated the assertion that the LTTE would accept UN human rights monitors in Tiger-controlled areas, indicating that the Ambassador's question of the previous day had made it "to Kilinochchi and back." END SUMMARY.

TNA URGES U.S. TO GO PUBLIC WITH CRITICISM

2. (C) In an April 3 meeting at the Embassy, TNA leader R. Sampanthan from Trincomalee and TNA members Suresh K. Premachandran from Jaffna, Mavai S. Senathirajah from Jaffna, and T. Kanagasabai from Batticaloa pressed Ambassador to give the GSL a "few good knocks" and be a more vocal critic of the Rajapaksa administration. Ambassador defended the Embassy and USG's record of challenging all sides to focus on a political solution to the conflict and our numerous efforts on human rights, both of which Sampanthan acknowledged. In a string of impassioned stories about the Tamil community's suffering, Sampanthan pleaded with Ambassador to do "still more" to show the GSL that the U.S. will not tolerate

continued human rights violations by the Sri Lanka Army and paramilitary factions like the Karuna group. Ambassador assured Sampanthan and the other TNA members that the U.S. is concerned about the Tamil community and committed to pushing all parties to seek a political solution.

"THIS ADMINISTRATION CANNOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM"

13. (C) When Ambassador asked Sampanthan whether he was involved in discussions with the administration on the long-awaited devolution proposal, Sampanthan said he has not been able to get a draft of the proposal and that the TNA was not asked to submit any input. TNA members scoffed at the idea that Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader Rauff Hakeem and other crossover MPs would be able to influence the outcome significantly, saying that Hakeem was not even able to protect his SLMC constituents. Sampanthan expressed frustration that while the country waits for the devolution proposal, resettlement of traditionally Tamil communities in Sampanthan's home district of Trincomalee with Sinhalese families was continuing unabated. Ambassador stated that he has stressed to the administration many times that resettlement must maintain the same ethnic balance that existed before residents were driven out by fighting. Sampanthan reiterated the need to show the administration that the U.S. was serious about its criticisms of the GSL. "Make it hurt," he urged, opining that the U.S. and India are the only members of the international community with any remaining influence over the government.

14. (C) Sampanthan did not believe President Rajapaksa could

COLOMBO 00000534 002 OF 003

present a genuine political solution to the conflict because he was constrained by his constituency to safeguard the "Sinhala Buddhist race." Sampanthan reiterated that Rajapaksa was elected on this platform and that his political base would balk at any genuine efforts at national reconciliation. Ambassador reasoned that Rajapaksa's credibility with hardline Sinhalese movements like the JVP and JHU might actually provide Rajapaksa greater latitude to seek a workable solution. Sampanthan rejected this assessment, saying "he's not made of that stuff." Sampanthan predicted that as a result of Rajapaksa's political constraints, the GSL would have no choice but to press forward with a military solution to eliminate the LTTE in the East and contain them in the North. Sampanthan stated that the LTTE would resist, especially in the North, and the result will be that "the Tamil people will suffer."

AUTHORSHIP OF AMPARA BUS BOMBING MYSTERIOUS

15. (C) Ambassador expressed concern about the Ampara bus bombing and asked whether the TNA believed that the LTTE was responsible (reftel). Each TNA delegate stated that he did not believe that the LTTE was responsible, proffering the theory that it was done by the Karuna group to discredit the LTTE during the SAARC summit. The TNA parliamentarians' response tracked closely LTTE statements on its website, Tamilnet. Ambassador told the TNA delegation that the bombing was of grave concern to the international community and that the Embassy was investigating the matter further. Sampanthan expressed interest in learning of Embassy's findings.

16. (C) Embassy sought clarification from the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, which dispatched officers to the bombing site within 24 hours. However, the monitors could not come to any definite conclusion concerning the perpetrators. The SLMM noted that the technique used in the Ampara bombing was similar to the January 14 and 15 bus bombings in Hikkaduwa and Nittambuwa, which most observers attribute to the LTTE.

LTTE SEEKS APPROVAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

¶7. (C) Ambassador asked the TNA delegation whether the LTTE would object to a UN human rights monitoring mission in Sri Lanka. Premachandran of Jaffna said that the LTTE would welcome it. Ambassador clarified that the monitors would have to be allowed to operate in Kilinochchi and the Vanni, LTTE-controlled territory, not just visit those areas. Sampanthan reiterated that the Tigers would accept this arrangement.

¶8. (C) Vanni district TNA member Selvan Adaikalanathan told poloff on April 4 that he had just returned from the Vanni the previous night. He stressed that he could definitely confirm that the LTTE would accept UN human rights monitors stationed in Sri Lanka, including LTTE-controlled areas. Adaikalanathan made it clear that he had first-hand knowledge that the LTTE would not object to UN human rights monitors. He expressed his appreciation for Ambassador's willingness to publicly criticize the administration on human rights issues. Although Adaikalanathan did not explicitly link the LTTE's willingness to accept UN human rights monitors with Ambassador's question to Sampanthan, it was evident from the context of his statements that the LTTE had been informed of Ambassador's questions on this topic the night before.

¶9. (C) COMMENT: Sampanthan and his colleagues' plea for Ambassador to go public with more pointed criticism of the

COLOMBO 00000534 003 OF 003

government's human rights and humanitarian failings was clearly heartfelt and born of frustration. It also tracks closely with the LTTE objective of seeking to undermine the government's credibility and reputation in the expectation that this will translate into greater international sympathy for the Tamil cause. The LTTE may well calculate that it can afford to welcome international monitors, while counting on the government to reject them, thereby scoring a cost-free propaganda coup. The more intriguing question is whether such overtures from groups close to the LTTE indicate a renewed interest by the Tigers in settlement negotiations - if only to buy a respite from the government's military pressure.
BLAKE